

The Eshatology of Globalisation and Physical Economics

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1. As we approach the Millennium, a serious challenge is being presented to our century's world order by economic globalisation, i.e. the integration and extension to a world scale of economic processes and commercial transactions, ignoring all state boundaries and borders. At the head of these processes stand the transnational corporations, within which a considerable amount of material and financial resources are concentrated, and by which are huge numbers of workers from many different nations are employed. The achievements of science and advanced technologies are intensively used in these processes; international trade links, specialisation, and co-operation are being developed. Foreseeing the inevitability of these processes of globalisation in the coming millennium, it is worth turning serious attention to the ambiguities and inner conflicts the processes imply.

Firstly, this globalisation, together with the modification of traditional methods of organisation of economical processes, begins to alter traditional ways of organising society and exercising power.

The persons at the head of international economical and financial structures concentrate in their hands huge authority, but it is unjustified. That authority does not recognise any limits, country borders, or political or ethno-cultural sovereignty, nor the necessity of ecological and demographical stability. They do not want to take into consideration the religious and traditional ways of life of the peoples who are involved in the executing of their global plans. This attempt to construct a global unity can be compared with the construction of the tower of Babel, for it represents the claim of humankind to arrange the world as a single whole, without God, and this blurs the distinction between the Creator and the Creation.

Secondly, the transnational corporations which bring about this globalisation have more and more easy access to the natural resources of the 3rd World countries and as a rule do not take into consideration ecological safety issues. Together with irreplaceable natural resources, flora and fauna disappear, air and water is polluted, the fertile layer of topsoil deteriorates, and the earth is covered with waste products which cannot be re-cycled. Mankind is on the edge of self-destruction, and this can hardly be prevented by state organisations responsible for ecological issues.

2. The inevitability of the end of the world is recognised by all Christians. However[^] Christian eschatology (from Gk. 'eschata' meaning 'the end things') as the doctrine of the end of the world, is not in its essence pessimistic.

According to the doctrine of the Church, after death people will rise again for the Last Judgement, which will precede the coming of God's kingdom on earth, which will come to change this sinful world. However, people cannot know when the end of this world will be, because the Creator can prolong the existence of mankind by His grace, despite their sins. Besides, all Christians should do everything possible so that, by the grace of God, life on earth may continue, and people's life may be worthwhile both in spiritual and material aspects.

And although in spiritual life believers cannot set limits for perfection, since no one can fully imitate Christ, nevertheless on the material side of life limits are needed because of the real threat of using up irreplaceable resources of our planet, and polluting it with waste on a global scale. There are now many people who write and speak about it, and there are different approaches to solving these problems, which are considered below.

3. The most well-known approach is to limit the use of resources by the application of such indirect methods as controlling the birth rate of the population, setting up recreational areas and nature preserves, introducing waste-reducing technologies, propagating and carrying out various measures to preserve flora and fauna.

How should such measures be interpreted from a Christian point of view?

In our opinion, believers can not share the ideas of the Maltusians or support the "golden billion" ideology or the aggressive and violent tactics of some branches of the "green" movement. At the same time, everything that is done to preserve life on Earth should receive the most active support of Christians.

But are these external measures of limitation of the use of Earth's resources sufficient enough? The answer is no. And here Christians of all denominations should say their word.

4. In our opinion, the main means of restriction should be self-limitation in the use of irreplaceable natural resources. Without this internal factor of self-restraint nature-protection cannot be effective.

It is not a question of revival on a global scale of Christian asceticism in its medieval understanding, but of all Christians agreeing to move in the direction of constraining prodigal consumption. Such constraining becomes possible first of all if there is a diminution of the military arsenals, and a reduction of the threat of a third world war. In addition to the disarmament movement, there should be movement towards the preservation of natural resources, in which Christians could play a significant role, by openly condemning consumerism, not only among themselves[^] but also among non-believers. In our opinion a great social and economic effect could be achieved through the ecumenical movement, and co-operation between the sister churches.

5. External and internal self-limitation in life-style should ground itself on the achievements of modern science and especially on achievements which are connected with a "non-entropising" (i.e. a sustainable-development) concept of world order.

In economics this view is shared by so-called "physical economics" -

The followers of this conception, unlike the "physiocrats", do not consider agriculture to be the main source of material well-being, and at the same time,

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following Leibnitz, they suppose that the material well-being of society wholly depends on the physical component, as regards material production. Just as evolution in wildlife aids the perfection of the living species, so by using the achievements of modern science

and implementing modern technology, people improve the material side of life, use less resources, and increase labour production output and the gain from every square kilometre of the Earth's populated surface.

This approach, discussed in the works of some economists allows us, when measuring the macroeconomic indices of the GDP, to get rid of those parts which in fact contribute nothing to the GDP, namely financial speculation, brokerage transactions, and the manipulating of futures.

6. The separation of the material component of the GNP from speculative trading aspects not only allows us to define the real state of the country, but also to evaluate, using the indices of material economics, the output in the resource-consuming branches of economy.

Such evaluation can help sound investment in scientific research, research aimed at reducing the consumption of irreplaceable resources and the creation of the necessary conditions for technological progress in the labour-consuming areas of economic activity. It can be stated that, already at this time the Earth could provide enough food for 25 billion people.

And it is possible to assert that those who work on perfecting the economic process in a way that respects Earth's natural resources have not yet said their final word.